



Legislative Department
Seattle City Council
Memorandum

Date: September 3, 2010

To: Councilmember Sally J. Clark, Chair
Councilmember Tim Burgess, Vice Chair
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, Member
Committee on the Built Environment (COBE)

From: Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff

Subject: September 8, 2010 COBE Meeting: Pike/Pine Design Guidelines Update

On August 11, 2010, city staff briefed COBE on Council Bill (CB) 116943, which would update the current design guidelines for the Pike/Pine neighborhood. Since 2008, the Council has been working to develop policies and Land Use Code changes to protect the unique character of the Pike/Pine neighborhood. Last July, the City Council adopted legislation sponsored by Councilmember Rasmussen that expanded the boundaries of the Pike/Pine Overlay District, renamed it a “Conservation Overlay” district, limited the scale of new projects, and encouraged new projects to retain existing older structures as part of the development site.

Summary of Proposed Legislation

CB 116943 (Attachment 1) is part of the second phase of work on the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District. It would update the current neighborhood design guidelines for Pike/Pine, and make related changes to the Land Use Code.

The proposed legislation would do the following:

1. Add a new section to the existing Pike/Pine Neighborhood Design Guidelines that would address local concerns about building height, bulk, and scale. In particular, the new section would address developments that incorporate “character structures” (defined as buildings 75 or more years old) located on the same site. The current Design Guidelines were adopted in 2000, and do not have a neighborhood specific section that addresses building height, bulk, and scale.
2. Revise the current guidelines, primarily to update the illustrations and examples.
3. Require as part of the design review process that when a character structure is located on the site of a proposed new project, the developer evaluate the key architectural elements of the character structure, and provide at least one design proposal that will maintain those elements and the integrity of the character structure.
4. Change the decision-maker from the Director of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to the local Design Review Board when a developer requests a departure from the method prescribed in the Land Use Code for incorporating a character structure into a new building.

5. Allow an exception from the prohibition against internally-illuminated cabinet signs in the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District for signs that are no larger than three square feet, to allow more flexibility for small signs that fit in with the current character of the neighborhood.

Staff Recommendation

I recommend that CB 116943 be adopted, with one clarification to Land Use Code Section 23.41.014 that was suggested during the public comment period. This section describes the design review process and lists the information that an applicant has to provide to the Design Review Board. For projects in the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District that include a character structure, CB 116943 would add a requirement that the applicant describe the character structure's "key architectural and structural elements" and how those elements relate to the developed context of the site, and also how the new project will "maintain those elements and the character structure's integrity".

The comment pointed out that the proposed language implies that a character structure cannot be demolished, because the applicant must describe how the new project will maintain its "key elements". However, the Conservation Overlay District is not a traditional historic district, and the demolition of character structures is permitted. I am proposing to amend the wording in the new subsection 23.41.014.B.3.f as shown below to clarify this point. The applicant would still be required to analyze the character structure, and would have to provide at least one alternative design that preserves the integrity of the structure (see subsection B.4 below). The proposed new wording in subsection B.3.f is shown double underlined and previously proposed language is shown ~~crossed out~~.

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f. In the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District established in Section 23.73.004, if a character structure is located on the same lot as a proposed project, the applicant shall:

1) Analyze the features that define the developed context of the structures located on the block front where the project is proposed, and on all block fronts facing the project;

2) Evaluate the relationship of the character structure's key architectural and structural elements to the developed context, and how the new project will respond to this relationship; and

3) Evaluate the character structure's key architectural and structural elements and how the new project will maintain those elements ~~and the character structure's integrity~~ by retaining the character structure or reflecting those elements in the new structure, or both.

4. ~~((The))~~ Except as provided in this subsection 23.41.014.B.4, the proponent is encouraged, but not required, to bring one ~~((4))~~ or more development concepts or alternatives to indicate possible design options for the site. In the Pike/Pine Conservation Overlay District established in Section 23.73.004, if a character structure is located on the same lot as a proposed project, the applicant shall provide at least one alternative development concept that maintains the character structure's key architectural and structural elements and the integrity of the character structure.

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Committee decision on clarification to Section 23.41.014:

Committee decision on CB 116943:

Attachment 1: Council Bill 116943 and proposed Pike/Pine Neighborhood Design Guidelines